

HEALTHY AGING

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Without greater public health emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion, the dramatic aging revolution will result in an unprecedented and overwhelming demand on public health, healthcare, and social services.

- By 2030, the number of adults age 65 and older will more than double from 35 million today to 70 million, or 1 of every 5 Americans.
- Effective prevention measures exist today to substantially reduce illness, disability, and long-term care needs among older adults. However, these measures are substantially underused.
- Critical public health strategies for older adults include promoting healthy lifestyles; expanding the use of preventive services (e.g., cancer screening); expanding the use of immunizations against pneumonia and influenza; reducing injury risks in homes (grab bars, improved lighting) and communities (e.g. curb cuts); and promoting the use of chronic disease self-management techniques.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- Established the “Healthy Aging Network” to determine current gaps in prevention research, identify promising interventions, and examine the feasibility of applying such interventions in community settings.
- Collaborated with the aging network (e.g., the Administration on Aging) to jointly fund mini-grant projects in 14 states/communities that focus on promotion of physical activity, expanding the use of preventive services, and increasing the availability of chronic disease self-management programs.
- Collaborated with external partners to develop and widely disseminate a compendium of key health indicators for older adults (a “Report Card”) for use by policymakers and health and aging professionals.
- Continues to support national organizations (e.g., the American Society on Aging, the National Council on the Aging) to promote healthy lifestyles, increase use of preventive services, and prevent injuries among older adults.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Aggressive outreach and fuller application of effective health-preserving strategies are critical to meeting the needs of a rapidly growing senior population. State and local health departments, the aging network, and organizations serving older adults are looking to CDC for scientific and programmatic expertise in strategies that reduce long-term care needs and preserve health and quality of life. CDC will lay the foundation for a nationwide “Healthy Aging” program that will serve as a vital resource to states and communities for up-to-date, science-based information. The program will also provide training and technical assistance; as well as provide successful and replicable program models to promote healthy lifestyles; increase the use of early detection services and adult immunizations; reduce home and community hazards for injuries; and promote the use of effective chronic disease self-management techniques.